Gunston Classics

THE TALE OF SNOWBALL LAMB

by

Arthur Scott Bailey

SLUMBER-TOWN TALES

THE TALE OF SNOWBALL LAMB

by

ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY

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&
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THE TALE OF SNOWBALL LAMB

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The Gunston Trust

**"You'd Better Git Out of the Way,"
Said Henrietta Hen.**

Frontispiece

THE TALE OF SNOWBALL LAMB

I

BLACK AND WHITE

"Hurrah!" Johnnie Green shouted. And he dashed out of the woodshed and ran to the barnyard as fast as he could scamper.

There was a good reason for his high spirits and his haste. His father had just told him he might have a lamb for a pet.

Farmer Green followed Johnnie at a slower pace. When he reached the barnyard fence Johnnie was already on the other side of it, trying to catch a certain black lamb.

Now, Johnnie Green was spry; but this black lamb was sprier. Whenever Johnnie thought he had the lamb the black rascal always managed to slip out of his clutches.

"I'll help you," said Farmer Green. And climbing the fence, he soon had the lively lamb cornered and caught.

Then Johnnie lost no time in taking his new pet in his own arms.

"I'm going to call him——" Johnnie began, as his father let go of the struggling black armful.

But Johnnie Green never finished what he had started to say. The first thing he knew the lamb had squirmed out of his arms and was running up the lane.

Johnnie straightened up and gazed after him in dismay.

"I don't believe I'll call him anything," he murmured, half to himself.

Farmer Green couldn't help laughing.

And then, noticing a very disappointed look on Johnnie's face, he said, "Cheer up, Johnnie! That lamb is the youngest one on the farm, but he's too big for a pet. He's a wild one. Let him run with the flock and we'll see if we can't do something to make you feel happy."

Well, Johnnie Green knew that when his father talked like that it was silly to be glum. So he cried, "All right!" And turning his back upon the black lamb, which was by this time almost up to the head of the lane, Johnnie walked back to the woodshed.

The next day, when Farmer Green came home from a drive over the hill, Johnnie shouted "Hurrah!" once more. For lying on a bit of hay in the bottom of the buggy was a white lamb no more than half as big as the lively black scamp that had got away from Johnnie the day before.

Johnnie Green didn't need to ask whose lamb this was. He knew at once that it was his own.

"Where'd you get him?" he demanded.

"At your uncle's!" his father explained.

Johnnie lifted the white lamb out of the buggy and set him down gingerly upon the ground. And the white lamb didn't try to run off. He was only a tiny thing, with a very soft coat and a very pink nose.

"I wonder if he's hungry," said Johnnie Green. "I'll get some corn and see if he wants anything."

"You'll have to feed him milk in a bottle," his father told him. "He isn't weaned yet. Bring him into the woodshed!"

In a little while Johnnie's father had found a baby's bottle, which he filled with warm milk.

Then all Johnnie had to do was to hold the bottle to his new pet's mouth. The lamb did the rest.

"I'm going to call him 'Snowball,'" Johnnie announced. And then he began to laugh.

"Look at his tail!" he shouted. "He'll switch it off if he isn't careful."

For as Snowball drank the milk he jerked his stubby tail up and down at a great rate.

Old dog Spot, who was stretched upon the woodshed threshold, gazed at Snowball with a lofty air.

"That lamb has a queer notion of the way a tail ought to be wagged," he said deep down in his throat. "He ought to wag it from side to side. But I suppose he's too young to know better."

II

A RIDE TO TOWN

Much to old dog Spot's disgust Johnnie Green and his new pet lamb soon became great friends. It wasn't long before Snowball, as Johnnie called the white lamb, followed his young master about the yard and even into the farmhouse—when Mrs. Green wasn't looking.

It was a remark that Johnnie made about Snowball one day which caused old Spot to speak his mind plainly to the Muley Cow. Johnnie Green actually said, in Spot's hearing, "Snowball knows as much as a dog!"

"I never did have any use for sheep,"

Spot told the Muley Cow. "Everybody knows they're all terribly stupid. So you can imagine how

I felt when Johnnie Green spoke like that to his father."

The Muley Cow chewed her cud. She had a far-off look in her eyes, as if she might be thinking about what Spot was saying—or as if she might not. Anyhow, she did not speak.

"And to think—" Spot growled—"to think how I used to take care of Johnnie when he was no more than a baby! Do you suppose this lamb could take care of a baby? Do you suppose he'd pull a baby out of the mill pond? Or fight off a bull? Or kill a snake?"

The Muley Cow turned her calm face upon Spot.

"If you're jealous——" she began.

"Jealous!" Spot barked. "Of course I'm not jealous. But I must say that this Snowball Lamb is very displeasing to me."

"Then why don't you——" the Muley Cow began again.

"I would," Spot interrupted, "I would—only I'm not a sheep-killer. And I don't intend to become one."

"This boy," said the Muley Cow, "he'll grow tired of that lamb. The other boys will begin to tease him because the lamb follows him about. And that will be too much for Johnnie. . . . I know boys," the Muley Cow declared.

Old dog Spot sighed. "I hope you're not mistaken," he remarked. "Time will tell. Just now anybody can see that Johnnie Green is simply crazy about that silly new pet of his."

It was only a few days later that something happened to cause old dog Spot to lose all hope.

Johnnie Green and his father hitched up the old horse Ebenezer and started for the village. Of course Spot would have followed them, under the wagon, if he had been at the barn when they left. But he wasn't. He was up in the pasture, chasing woodchucks.

Just as old Ebenezer turned the corner at the foot of the hill Johnnie Green happened to look back. And there was Snowball, following a little way behind them!

Of course it would never do to let him run all the way to the village and back. And Farmer Green didn't want to turn around and take Snowball home. So Johnnie Green jumped down and lifted Snowball into the wagon.

So he rode to the village; and then rode home again.

Johnnie Green was greatly pleased by the whole affair. And Snowball was pleased, too. As soon as he reached the farmyard he began talking about his trip to the village.

Everybody listened to Snowball with wonder. That is, everybody wondered except Henrietta Hen. She began talking in a shrill voice about her visit to the county fair. And she said spitefully to Snowball, "You'd better get out of the way before old dog Spot comes back from the pasture!"

III

MRS. HEN TELLS TALES

Old dog Spot came home from the pasture feeling quite pleased with himself. He had caught a fat woodchuck. And that was enough to make him happy.

Spot hadn't crossed the barnyard when Henrietta Hen came fluttering up to him. She was a busybody, always trying to get somebody into trouble. "Snowball went to the village with Johnnie Green and his father!" Henrietta shrieked.

"That's good news," said old dog Spot. "I've been hoping to hear something like that. We're well rid of that Snowball Lamb."

"Oh! But they brought him back with them!" Henrietta Hen explained.

Spot's face fell. "That's a pity," he said.

Henrietta Hen peered into Spot's face. There was something that she couldn't understand.

"Why aren't you angry?" she inquired in her high-pitched voice. "Don't you realize that Snowball tried to *follow the wagon* to the village? To be sure, they picked him up down at the corner. But I want you to know that he tried to *take your place*."

At that old Spot let out a howl of rage.

"I'll never go woodchuck hunting again!" he cried. "Things have come to a pretty pass if I can't leave the farmyard for a few hours without having a lamb insult me like that."

Henrietta Hen was pleased.

"I thought you'd want to know what had happened," she remarked. "And now I must add that Snowball has been boasting about his trip. Of

course, his journey was nothing, compared with my visit to the county fair last year. But I don't like to hear a lamb telling about his travels. Can't you put a stop to it?"

Old dog Spot shook his head.

"For once," he said slowly, "I can't help wishing I was a sheep-killer."

"Well," said Henrietta, "you know you could try."

"It's not a question of trying," Spot told her. "My family isn't a sheep-killing one. I have to live up to the family name."

"Well," Henrietta Hen declared, "if I were you I'd join another family—at least for a short time."

But old dog Spot declared that that wouldn't do at all. "We'll have to be patient," he said. "The Muley Cow claims that Johnnie Green will get tired of Snowball sooner or later. It may be that she is right. Let us hope so!"

"Farmer Green ought to turn that great lamb into the pasture," Henrietta Hen spluttered.

That was exactly what Mrs. Green herself thought.

"Your lamb can't come into my kitchen!" she called at that very moment. For Johnnie Green was just then entering the doorway, with Snowball at his heels.

"Thank goodness," Spot barked, "there's one person on this farm who has some sense! If it wasn't for Mrs. Green I'd be tempted to run away."

As Johnnie Green closed the door behind him, leaving Snowball upon the stone step, Snowball gave a plaintive

baa-a-a!

"Ugh!" cackled Henrietta Hen. "Did you ever hear such a silly sound in all your life?"

IV

SCHOOL BEGINS

After Snowball's trip to the village old dog Spot scarcely stirred from the farmyard. He left the woodchucks to scurry about the pasture as they pleased. For he felt that he ought to keep an eye on Snowball.

The very next time that Snowball started to follow Johnnie Green out of the yard Spot ran up to him and barked at his heels. "Go back!" Spot growled. "Don't you dare leave this yard!"

And then, to Spot's surprise, Johnnie Green picked up a stick and threatened him with it.

"You let my lamb alone!" Johnnie cried. That was bad enough, according to old dog Spot's notion. But when Johnnie shouted, "Get out!" at him, that was worse.

Spot tucked his tail between his legs and slunk away, to hide himself under the woodshed. And there he stayed for the rest of the morning and sulked.

But in the afternoon he began to feel more cheerful. For Spot had heard Mrs. Green remark that school began the next day.

That was good news. At least Spot so thought it.

"This lamb won't get much notice from Johnnie Green after to-day," Spot told Henrietta Hen. "He'll be left here in the yard. And it won't be long now before Mrs. Green tells Farmer Green to put him in the pasture with the flock. She won't have him in everybody's way. She'll get rid of him quickly. You know that when Mrs. Green makes up her mind, things generally happen to suit her."

Henrietta nodded her handsome head.

"Just what I've often told the Rooster!" she exclaimed.

Well, the following morning, as much as an hour after breakfast, Johnnie Green started up the road with some books under his arm and a lunch basket in his hand. It was the first day of school. And somehow Johnnie wasn't feeling very happy. He had dawdled about the house—so his mother said. It appeared that he was in no hurry to leave home.

Before Johnnie had reached the barn, which stood beside the road, Mrs. Green stepped out of the house and looked at him.

"You'd better get along!" she called after him. "You don't want to be late the first day of school!"

So Johnnie Green fell into a jog trot, which he kept up all the way to the red schoolhouse.

As he came in sight of the little box-like building he saw other youngsters hurrying through the doorway. And then Johnnie ran as fast as he could.

He burst inside the schoolroom just as the school mistress tapped the little bell on her desk, which meant that everybody must stop talking,

because school had begun. Johnnie Green hurried to a seat. But before he reached it all the other pupils burst into a shout.

Johnnie looked around. And there, trotting across the floor, was Snowball! He had followed Johnnie all the way from Farmer Green's barn.

It was some time before things were quiet. The teacher had to ring her little bell a good many times, and even rap upon her desk with a ruler, before the boys and girls stopped laughing. And then the teacher turned to Johnnie Green and spoke to him.

"Mary!" she said. "Is this your little lamb?"

The teacher seemed surprised because her pupils began to roar at that. But she made no attempt to silence them. She did not even try to quiet a certain boy called "Red," who made more noise than all the rest together.

Meanwhile Johnnie Green's face looked like a great red apple. And it grew several shades redder when Snowball walked up to his seat and stood close beside him.

"Don't you think—" said the teacher after a while—"don't you think, Mary, that you'd better take your little lamb home?"

Johnnie Green did not answer. But he hung his head as he rose and hurried out of the schoolroom, with Snowball following close behind him.

Once outside Johnnie could hear the children still laughing. And he even thought that he could hear the teacher laughing, too.

That very morning Snowball found himself turned into the pasture where Farmer Green's flock of sheep were passing the summer. And it wasn't long before the whole barnyard was filled with the noise of gossiping tongues.

"For once," said Henrietta Hen, "the Muley Cow knew what she was talking about when she said Johnnie Green would grow tired of that white lamb."

As for old dog Spot, he told everybody that he was going up to the pasture to chase woodchucks.

And as for Johnnie Green, he told his mother that he didn't believe he'd go back to school any more.

But she said he should, and that very morning.

And things generally happened the way Mrs. Green intended.

V

THE PROMISED TREAT

Snowball wasn't sorry that Johnnie Green had turned him into the pasture. He found the pasture a delightful place. He had plenty of company, for there was a whole flock of sheep with him. And not only did he soon become acquainted with them. He met other folk, such as Billy Woodchuck and Jimmy Rabbit and old Mr. Crow. And though some of the older sheep paid scant heed to so young a lamb as Snowball, Mr. Crow often went out of his way to stop and talk with him.

That was because Mr. Crow loved a bit of gossip. And he was willing to chat with anybody on the chance of picking up some interesting morsel of news.

"We're going to have a treat," Snowball informed old Mr. Crow one day.

The old gentleman cocked his head on one side and looked at Snowball.

"How do you know you are?" he demanded. He was a great one for asking questions.

"The Muley Cow told me," Snowball explained. "Down in the barn she heard Farmer Green tell Johnnie about it."

"Ah, ha!" cried Mr. Crow. "I'll have to keep an eye on things. If there's going to be a treat I must get my share of it. . . . Where's it going to be—where do you expect to have this treat?"

"Right here in this pasture!"

"That's good!" Mr. Crow exclaimed. "I'm glad of that. I can enjoy it, then. I feared it might be in the barn. And I like plenty of room if I'm to enjoy a treat properly."

Snowball began to feel a bit uneasy.

"The Muley Cow didn't say anything about your being invited," he blurted. "In fact she said that this treat was for us sheep only."

"Don't you worry about that!" the old gentleman assured him. "I know well enough that if Farmer Green didn't mention inviting me it was because he forgot it. I know he wouldn't like it if I stayed away."

Snowball began to wish he hadn't mentioned the treat to Mr. Crow. But the secret was out. And when Mr. Crow asked when the treat was going to be Snowball confessed that the Muley Cow had told him the flock would enjoy it that very day.

"Ah!" said Mr. Crow with a smirk.

"Then I must stay where I can see what's going on. So I'm going to sit in that tall elm over by the stone wall. When I see the sheep begin to bunch together I'll join you at once. . . . Please bleat three times when the treat is ready, for I might be dozing."

"I will," Snowball promised.

And then Mr. Crow got ready to fly away.

"By the way," he said, pausing, "what's the treat to be?"

"The Muley Cow said she heard Farmer Green tell Johnnie to 'salt the sheep to-day,'" Snowball explained.

To his great surprise old Mr. Crow let out a deafening squawk when he heard that bit of news.

"Then I'll keep as far away from the pasture as I can get!" he cried.

VI

MR. CROW EXPLAINS

Snowball couldn't understand old Mr. Crow's rage. Mr. Crow had invited himself to the treat that Johnnie Green was going to give the flock. But the moment the old gentleman heard that the treat was going to be *salt* he had squalled at the top of his hoarse voice that he was going to stay as far from the pasture as he could get.

"What's the matter?" Snowball asked Mr. Crow. "Don't you like salt?"

Mr. Crow made a wry face.

"No, I don't!" he spluttered.

"Well, just because you don't happen to care for salt is no reason for your being so angry," Snowball told him.

And then Mr. Crow almost took his breath away.

"I agree with you," he said gruffly! And Mr. Crow was a person who was never known to agree with anybody! So that was an astonishing remark for him to make.

"Then I suppose you'll get over being angry, at once," Snowball ventured.

"I won't!" Mr. Crow thundered. "And take a bit of advice, young fellow: Don't go near the salting party! It will be dangerous," he added darkly.

"Why will it be dangerous?" Snowball inquired.

The old gentleman shook his head and put on a very wise look.

"I don't believe you've ever been at a salting party," he said. And Snowball confessed that he hadn't.

Whereat Mr. Crow nodded his head up and down several times and looked even wiser than before.

"It's lucky for you, my lad, that you told me about this affair," he declared. "For I'm going to keep you out of a peck of trouble. Don't you go near the party! Keep just as far away from it as you can! When you see Johnnie Green come inside the pasture you scramble over the stone wall and hide!" And now he shook his head.

"It's a pity—" he sighed—"a pity you can't fly, or climb a tree."

He was so gloomy that Snowball couldn't help feeling uncomfortable. And all he could manage to say was one word which he had hard work to stammer out. It was "W-w-why?"

"Because it's just a trick!" Mr. Crow explained. "It's a trick to catch you. This trick of salting the sheep is as old as the hills. But I suppose you're so

young you never have happened to hear of it. I must say," he added, "I'm surprised that the Muley Cow didn't take the trouble to tell you all about it."

"Maybe she's too young to know about it, too," Snowball suggested.

"Young!" Mr. Crow cried with a short, mirthless laugh. "The Muley Cow's not young. She's the oldest cow on the farm. If the truth must be told, she's so old that Farmer Green wouldn't keep her if it weren't that Johnnie Green thinks she belongs to him. And he'd raise a terrible row if his father sold her."

"Are you too young to explain about this trick that you just warned me against?" Snowball asked. "I'd like to know how there can be any danger in salt.

How can anybody be caught with salt?"

"Well, you *are* a silly!" cried Mr. Crow. "Can't you guess that Johnnie Green is going to put salt on everybody's tail?"

VII

WARNING THE FLOCK

Snowball Lamb was puzzled. He didn't understand old Mr. Crow's answer at all.

"What if Johnnie Green should put salt on my tail?" he asked Mr. Crow. "What harm would that do?"

The old gentleman stared at Snowball as if he couldn't quite believe that anybody could be so stupid.

"Haven't you ever heard that that's the way to catch people?" cried Mr. Crow at last. "Why, there isn't a boy in Pleasant Valley who doesn't know that; and many of 'em carry salt about in their pockets all the time, hoping to get a chance some day to put the salt on my tail, and capture me!" Mr. Crow's bright eyes snapped. And his bill snapped,

too. For the mere thought of such scheming always made him terribly angry.

And then Snowball said something that made Mr. Crow more impatient than ever.

"I don't care if Johnnie Green does catch me," Snowball declared. "Johnnie wouldn't hurt me. We've always been great friends."

"He wouldn't, eh?" Mr. Crow retorted. "How do you know he wouldn't hurt you?"

"He never *has* hurt me," Snowball replied.

"Perhaps not! Perhaps not!" Mr. Crow croaked. "But you never can tell. You never can tell what a boy will do. And if you go to the salting party and get into trouble, don't say I didn't warn you!" As the old fellow flew off he looked as if all the cares in the world were weighing him down. Snowball noticed that he flew heavily. It took a great amount of flapping of his broad wings to lift him out of the pasture. And when he was well up in the air he gave a glum *caw, caw* as he wheeled and sailed away down the wind.

Well, Snowball couldn't help being somewhat disturbed by Mr. Crow's grave actions and his graver remarks. "I wonder," thought Snowball, "if Mr. Crow knows what he's talking about. I'll ask the flock!"

So Snowball ran down the hillside pasture to the place where the flock had gathered to graze. And to his astonishment some of the flock didn't even lift their heads from the grass when he related all that Mr. Crow had said. Those that did pause and listen to Snowball only giggled and went to feeding again. No! there was one that spoke to him. Aunt Nancy Ewe spoke up a bit tartly.

"If you're worried you'd better stay away when Johnnie Green comes to salt us," she told him. "*We* all expect to have a very pleasant time," she added.

"Have you ever had salt put on your tail?" Snowball asked the old lady.

"Certainly not!" she snapped. And she glared at Snowball so fiercely that he fell back several steps. "Are you trying to insult me?" she cried.

He did not answer. It was plain to him that Aunt Nancy didn't know anything about the trick of putting salt on one's tail. Yes! Mr. Crow must be wiser than she was.

"They'll all get into trouble," Snowball thought. And then he said something that was almost exactly like what Mr. Crow had said to him. "They can't say I didn't warn them!"

VIII

SALTING THE SHEEP

Snowball Lamb stood in the pasture apart from the rest of the flock. Aunt Nancy Ewe had returned to her grazing. And not one of her companions acted as if some dreadful peril hung over him. Nobody would have thought, to look at the flock, that they were about to have salt put on their tails. But Snowball knew that it was so. Far down the valley he could hear old Mr. Crow's warning *caw*, *caw*, telling him again to beware of Johnnie Green.

And just then Johnnie squirmed through the pasture bars and pulled a sack after him. Presently he began to call to the sheep. And Snowball watched while they went, one and all, on a dead run towards the bars.

Then Snowball turned and ran the other way, straight for the stone wall. He didn't even look back once, but scrambled over the wall and lost himself in the tangle of berry bushes that grew in a rocky old pasture that hadn't been used for years.

"He's salting them by this time," Snowball muttered to himself. "Johnnie Green is salting the sheep. And I'm glad Mr. Crow warned me, for I shouldn't want salt put on my tail. It must be terrible to be caught that way."

"What's that you're saying?" said a lively voice near-by.

Snowball leaped back; then stood still and stared at a pair of antlers which stuck up from behind a berry bush.

The antlers rose a little higher. And then Snowball saw the face of Nimble Deer beneath them.

"What were you murmuring about *salt?*" Nimble inquired pleasantly.

"Johnnie Green is salting the sheep over in our pasture," Snowball explained.

"He is, eh?" cried Nimble Deer. "Then why aren't you there with the rest?"

Snowball shook his head.

"It's too dangerous," he said. "I don't want salt put on my tail."

Nimble Deer gave him a queer look.

"It is dangerous, while Johnnie Green is there—or it would be dangerous if he had a gun," Nimble admitted. "But what's this you say about salt on your tail?"

"Johnnie Green is putting salt on the tail of every sheep in the flock," Snowball declared.

"That's odd," said Nimble. "I'll have to look into this matter—after Johnnie Green has left the pasture."

Snowball did not follow Nimble as he moved nearer the stone wall. But he stood still and

watched. Presently he saw Nimble leap the wall. After that Snowball could no longer see him.

It was some time later when Nimble jumped back over the wall and landed lightly on the ledge that ran alongside it. And Snowball noticed that his face wore a very cheerful look.

"Well?" said Snowball.

"That was as good salt as I ever tasted," Nimble remarked, running his tongue over his lips. "If you hurry you'll be able to get a taste even now."

"I've never eaten any salt," said Snowball.

"Then hurry, by all means!" cried Nimble Deer. "You don't know what you're missing."

"Has Johnnie gone?" Snowball inquired.

"Long ago!"

"I suppose he spilled some of the salt on the ground," said Snowball. "You know he's a very careless boy."

"He spilled heaps of it," Nimble Deer replied. "But the sheep are eating it fast."

Well, Snowball was puzzled. How could the sheep be eating salt if Johnnie Green had caught them? It was more than he could understand. But if Nimble Deer had been with them—and come back safely—there couldn't be any great danger.

So Snowball hurried over the stone wall and scampered down to the place near the bars, where the flock still lingered.

As Snowball joined them he saw that they were all busily eating something white that lay in little piles upon the ground.

He tasted of the stuff, carefully. It was delicious. And wasting no more time, he gobbled up all of the salt that he could get.

When it was gone Snowball turned to old Aunt Nancy Ewe.

"May I lick the salt off your tail?" he asked her politely.

Aunt Nancy Scolded Snowball

She gave him a haughty stare.

"Have you no respect for your elders?" Aunt Nancy asked him severely.

"Pardon me!" said Snowball. "Maybe I'm mistaken, but Mr. Crow told me——"

"Mr. Crow!" Aunt Nancy cried, before Snowball could finish. "So it's Mr. Crow that's been putting queer ideas into your head! I might have known it. After this don't ever listen to him! He's been the means of your almost missing a fine treat—and one that doesn't come every day in the year."

IX

CIRCUS TRICKS

Johnnie Green had been to the circus. And of course he wanted to try a good many tricks that he had learned there. At first he made old dog Spot perform for him. But when he attempted to get Spot to jump through a hoop of fire the old dog refused flatly to play any more.

That was why Johnnie went to the pasture and brought Snowball Lamb back to the farmyard.

"Now, Snowball," said Johnnie Green, "I've been to the circus and seen ever so many kinds of trained animals—horses and elephants and dogs and monkeys and seals. But I didn't see any trained lamb. If you pay attention and learn what I try to teach you maybe you and I can join the circus next year."

Snowball Lamb answered, "*Baa-a-a!*"

"All right!" cried Johnnie. "Now you just jump through this wooden hoop!"

But it didn't prove to be as easy as all that. Johnnie Green had to work a long, long time before he succeeded at last in teaching Snowball to obey him. And then, after Snowball jumped through the hoop in as graceful a manner as anybody could have asked for, Johnnie was not quite satisfied.

"You'll have to learn to jump through a paper hoop if we're ever going to be taken along with the circus," he told Snowball.

Again Snowball answered, "*Baa-a-a!*"

"All right!" said Johnnie. "I'll make

some paper hoops. And to-morrow we'll see what you can do."

So back to the pasture went Snowball. And into the woodshed went Johnnie Green. There he stayed all the rest of the afternoon, knocking old

barrels apart, chopping and sawing and hammering. He laid newspapers down upon the floor and trimmed them neatly with his mother's shears. He made flour paste in the kitchen. And when milking time came he had four fine hoops all covered with newspaper.

Johnnie wanted to make one more. But his father came along and happened to pick up a barrel stave, remarking that it was just the thing to make a boy jump to his work. So Johnnie decided, for some reason or other, that four hoops would be enough to practice with. Of course when he and Snowball joined the circus they would need dozens of hoops. But there wasn't really any hurry about that.

So he went for a milk pail and trotted off to the barn, where he sat down on his three-legged stool and began milking the Muley Cow.

He couldn't help thinking, as he sat there and sent streams of milk tinkling down upon the bottom of the tin pail, what a fine scheme it would be to build a hoop big enough for the Muley Cow to jump through. It ought to be easy to teach her.

For everybody knew that she was a famous jumper. She made more trouble, jumping the fence, than all the rest of Farmer Green's herd.

Johnnie Green got to thinking so intently about the matter that he began to dawdle. And if there was one thing that the Muley Cow didn't like it was to have to stand still while a slow milker puttered at his work. So she suddenly gave her tail a switch and brought the end of it across Johnnie Green's cheek.

It was a stinging smack. And Johnnie Green cried, "Ouch!"

After that he stopped his day-dreaming until milking was over. And then he went back to the woodshed and gazed at the four paper hoops leaning against the woodpile.

X

THE TIGER

In the same pasture with Snowball was a black lamb. He was the black lamb that Farmer Green once gave to Johnnie for a pet. But he ran away up the lane the very first time Johnnie tried to hold him in his arms.

After that the black lamb had always stayed with the flock. He was a wild, unruly fellow, bigger and older than Snowball. And he was quite outspoken—and not always careful of his language.

This black lamb chanced to be near Snowball when Johnnie Green came into the pasture on a certain fine morning.

And when Johnnie began calling to Snowball the black lamb said, "Why don't you run the other way? That's what I always do when boys call me."

Snowball made no answer. He stood and looked at Johnnie Green, who was walking towards him with outstretched hand.

"Come on!" cried the black lamb. "I'll run with you."

"No!" said Snowball. "Johnnie may have something good for me to eat. Some salt, maybe!"

"Huh!" said the black lamb. "Don't be stupid! What if he has brought you a little salt? He'll want you to jump through that hoop again for him, the way he did yesterday." Snowball had told the black lamb about the strange proceeding of the afternoon before.

"Well—" Snowball murmured, as he hesitated, not knowing whether to obey the black lamb or Johnnie Green.

"Well! Are you coming with me?" the black lamb demanded. "*I'm* not going to stay here where

that boy can grab me. *I* don't intend to spend my time jumping through any old hoop. *I'm* not quite so silly as to do that."

"I believe I'll let Johnnie catch me," Snowball told him. "Johnnie said something yesterday about our joining the circus. No doubt you've noticed the circus posters on the side of the barn?"

"I have," said the black lamb with something like a sneer. "No doubt you've noticed the picture of the tiger?"

"Yes, I have," Snowball admitted.

"My uncle joined a circus once," said the black lamb.

"Is that so?" cried Snowball. "Tell me—did he enjoy it?"

"I can't say," the black lamb replied. "He never came back again. They fed him to the tiger—so I have been told."

And then the black lamb started to run. And suddenly Snowball whisked about and followed him.

Johnnie Green wondered what had come over Snowball. Was this the pet that had once followed him all the way to school?

"I'll keep him tied up in the barn for a few days —once I catch him," thought Johnnie. If he intended to teach circus tricks to Snowball he certainly didn't want to spend valuable time chasing him all around the pasture.

At last Johnnie Green had Snowball cornered. At last he slipped a rope about Snowball's neck. And then he led his pet towards the bars.

"*Baa-a-a!*" called the black lamb.

It sounded so much like a jeer that

Johnnie turned around and made a face at the black rascal.

In the barnyard Johnnie brought forth a paper-covered hoop. He held it up in front of Snowball. "Jump!" he cried.

But Snowball drew back.

"*Baa-a-a!*" he bleated. "How do I know that there isn't a tiger behind that thing?"

"Come!" Johnnie urged him. "Jump! Jump!"

Snowball only moved further away.

And then Johnnie Green lowered the paper-covered hoop and stepped forward to grasp Snowball by his fleece.

As Johnnie's hand let the hoop fall Snowball gave a frightened blat. Staring right at him, and grinning horribly, was a tiger pasted upon the side of the barn.

Snowball turned and ran towards the gate.

XI

CRACKED CORN

The next time Johnnie Green dragged Snowball into the farmyard he shut the gate carefully behind him.

"We'll never join the circus if you're going to behave like this," Johnnie told Snowball severely. "Now, you pay attention!"

He held up a bare hoop—not a paper-covered one—and when he said, "Jump!" Snowball showed that he had not forgotten his lesson of the afternoon before.

"That's better!" cried Johnnie Green. "Jump again!" And when Snowball jumped once more Johnnie was so pleased that he went into the chicken house and came back with a handful of cracked corn. "Here!" he said to Snowball. "There's more like it if you behave yourself."

Snowball munched his corn contentedly.

"The black lamb would like this," he thought. "I'll tell him about this corn the next time I see him. Then maybe he won't be so quick to call me stupid."

Somehow the cracked corn made Snowball forget all about the frightful picture of the tiger that grinned from the side of the barn. And at last Johnnie succeeded in getting Snowball to jump through one of the paper hoops which he had so carefully made the day before.

"There!" Johnnie cried. "You've done it at last!" And he was so delighted that he went once more to the chicken house. And this time he brought back two handfuls of cracked corn.

Unluckily, just as he came out of the chicken house he met his father going in.

"Here!" Farmer Green exclaimed. "What are you doing with my chicken feed?"

"I'm giving a little to Snowball," Johnnie told him.

"Ah!" cried Farmer Green with a sly smile. "Fattening your lamb for market, eh?"

Johnnie's face fell. "No!" he replied. "Of course not! I wouldn't sell Snowball. He's—he's too valuable."

Farmer Green guffawed.

"He's a circus lamb!" Johnnie cried hotly. "He's learning circus tricks!"

"Well," said his father, "maybe I have some circus hens in here, for all I know. Don't you feed my corn to that lamb!"

"Can your hens jump through paper hoops?" Johnnie asked.

"Can your lamb?" demanded Farmer Green.

"Watch!" said Johnnie then. And, holding up another of the paper-covered hoops, he persuaded Snowball to leap through it neatly.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" cried Farmer Green—whatever that may mean.

Johnnie Green thought it was a good time to ask a question.

"Mayn't I give him a little corn once in a while?" he begged.

"Oh, I suppose so," said his father. "But if you get him too fat he won't be much of a jumper."

"But jumping ought to keep him thin," Johnnie insisted.

Just then Snowball gave a plaintive bleat: "*Baa-a-a-a!*"

"There!" Johnnie exclaimed. "He thinks so, too!"

XII

THE ACCIDENT

Snowball was quick to learn one thing. He soon found that jumping through Johnnie Green's paper-covered hoops brought him plenty of cracked corn.

No longer did Snowball run away from his young master when Johnnie entered the pasture and called to him. Nothing that the rascally black lamb said could persuade Snowball to lead Johnnie Green a chase.

Much to the black lamb's disgust Snowball would start for the bars the moment Johnnie appeared there. "Johnnie wants to give me a treat!" Snowball would exclaim. "There's cracked corn waiting for me!" And off he would go.

Strange as it may seem, Johnnie tired of the circus tricks before Snowball did. It wasn't long before several days would go by without Johnnie's once holding up a hoop for Snowball to jump through. And often Snowball would moon about the farmyard *wishing* that Johnnie would do that very thing.

"I hope the cracked corn isn't getting low," said Snowball to himself. And he cried, "*Ba-a-a-a-a!*" But Johnnie Green paid no heed to him. Though Johnnie was at that very moment in the swing he never once looked at Snowball as he roamed mournfully about.

So Snowball crossed the road and strolled up the steep bank opposite the farmhouse. And having nothing better to do he was about to stroll down again when he spied something that made him stop short.

Was that a paper-covered hoop that he saw, right there at the top of the bank? He wondered. It was round. And it was certainly covered with something that looked like paper.

For a moment Snowball thought he would walk around the hoop—if it was one—and examine it. He couldn't see anybody holding it up on edge. But there it was, just waiting for somebody to come along and jump through it!

"It's a hoop!" Snowball muttered to himself. "There's no doubt about that." And lowering his head he ran at the hoop—and jumped.

There was a splitting sound and a crash, both at the same time.

Instead of bursting through a thin paper shell and clearing the hoop neatly Snowball found himself wedged inside something. Though he didn't know it, he had butted the end of a barrel, knocking in its head and plunging headlong inside it.

Meanwhile Johnnie Green had stopped swinging. He looked across the road just in time to see the barrel totter on the edge of the steep bank. Not only totter; but begin to roll down hill!

Out of the barrel stuck two woolly legs, both kicking frantically.

"What in the world——" Johnnie Green exclaimed. He leaped from the swing and ran towards the strange sight. But he was too late to help.

The barrel fast gathered headway. It crossed the road like some live thing, to bring up against the farmhouse with a terrific smash.

Instantly the barrel fell into a dozen pieces as its staves caved in. And out of the wreck rose Snowball. He gave one frightened bleat. And then he tore off towards the pasture as fast as he could run. He didn't even wait to see if Johnnie Green would give him a treat of cracked corn.

As he ran he said to himself, "There may have been a tiger inside that thing. . . . I don't know! . . . I wouldn't join the circus for all the cracked corn in the world!"

XIII

FOLLOW MY LEADER

There was one game of which Farmer Green's sheep never seemed to tire. They called it "Follow My Leader." And even the oldest members of the flock played it every day. Though they had grand-children—many of them—and were quite solemn and sedate, they still continued to run anywhere whenever somebody happened to lead the way.

You wouldn't suppose they could have enjoyed leaving good pasturage to go tearing off to goodness knows where, just because some empty-headed sheep chanced to break into a run.

When Snowball first joined the flock in the pasture he tried to do just as every one else did. So

whenever he saw the flock get under way suddenly he hastened to keep up with the rest.

At first Snowball was curious to know why they were all running. But nobody could tell him the reason. And in time he ceased to wonder.

At last he decided, one day, to see if the flock would follow him. He looked about at his neighbors. They were feeding quietly.

"I hope they'll play the game when I start it," Snowball said under his breath.

And then, *baaing* his loudest, he began to run.

The flock stopped eating instantly. For a moment nobody moved.

"They aren't going to play!" thought Snowball.

But an old ewe suddenly wheeled about and followed him.

That was enough for the others. Out of the corner of his eye Snowball could see them all jump and come crowding after him.

He was headed for the stone wall. Beyond it lay a rough, rocky stretch of waste land, covered by a tangle of raspberry bushes.

"I wonder if they'll follow me over the wall!" Snowball muttered.

He didn't jump the wall. It was too high for that. But he scrambled over it without any trouble, for his little feet found plenty of footholds amid the jutting rocks.

Snowball had already landed on the further side of the wall when *thud! thud! thud!* other members of the flock came thumping down upon the ledge beside him. He moved aside a little way, because he didn't want to be stepped on.

Then, all at once, a squeaky, frightened voice cried, "What's the matter? Is there an earthquake?"

Though Snowball looked all about he couldn't see the speaker anywhere.

Meanwhile there sounded a *patter, patter! patter!* which came from hurrying feet in the pasture. And there sounded a *click! click! click!*

which came from scrambling feet climbing over the wall. And there sounded further *thuds* which came from those same feet as they thundered down upon the ledge.

At last the slowest sheep had joined Snowball. He still searched for the squeaky voice.

"This is queer!" Snowball murmured. "I don't see where that odd voice came from!"

He soon found out. For as he picked his way to the foot of the ledge, to nibble at the grass that grew down below, he saw peering out of a hole in the ground the face of a fat old gentleman whom he had sometimes met in the pasture.

This person's name was Uncle Jerry Chuck. And he looked terribly scared. His teeth were chattering. His nose was twitching.

Somehow Uncle Jerry's fright seized Snowball, too. With a bleat of terror he turned and fled up the ledge, scurried over the wall, and ran back where he had just come from.

Like one sheep the whole flock turned tail and followed Snowball with frantic *baas*.

XIV

TEASING UNCLE JERRY

Farmer Green's flock of sheep had followed Snowball over the stone wall and back into the pasture. And soon every one of them was grazing again as if nothing had happened.

Now, Snowball was greatly pleased. It was the first time he had ever started that game called Follow My Leader. And there wasn't a sheep nor a lamb that hadn't gone chasing after him when he showed them the way.

Snowball saw many merry games ahead of him. "I'll give them some good runs!" he promised himself.

And he did. Before that morning was over he led the flock up to the furthest corner of the pasture

in a mad scramble. And before the afternoon was over he took them on a brisk run to the bars.

That made three times for the day.

On each summer's day that followed Snowball played Follow My Leader oftener than he had the day before. So it happened that by the end of a week, when evening came, the older sheep were weary from all the running they had done, all the scrambling over the stone wall. For Snowball's favorite trick was to lead the sheep over the wall and into the tangle of raspberry bushes where Uncle Jerry Chuck lived.

Snowball had soon learned that there was nothing to fear over there. He discovered that it was the noise the flock made when leaping down upon the ledge that alarmed Uncle Jerry Chuck. Drowsing in his underground chamber Uncle Jerry had thought there must be an earthquake. That was why his teeth chattered. That was why his nose twitched, when he peeped out of his doorway.

As soon as Snowball learned all this he took great pains to land upon the ledge as heavily as he

could. He liked to hear Uncle Jerry Chuck's teeth chatter; he liked to see Uncle Jerry shiver; he liked the sound of Uncle Jerry's squeaky voice asking what was the matter.

So Snowball enjoyed his days in the pasture—or *in and out* of it. In fact he enjoyed them more than anybody else in the flock. For the others began to grow tired of being led helter-skelter in a headlong flight. And the old folks especially became annoyed because Snowball took them so often over the stone wall.

At last the old dame known as "Aunt Nancy," all hung with great folds of thick fleece, spoke her mind plainly to Snowball himself.

"You're making a nuisance of yourself," she told him. "In all my days I never knew another youngster—a mere lamb!—to lead the flock. And here you're making us run our legs off every day! When I was your age we children never started a game of Follow My Leader. We *followed* behind the rest of the flock. We never *led*."

All this was a great surprise for Snowball. "D-don't you like the game?" he stammered.

"The game's all right," the old lady said. "But nobody cares to play it a dozen times a day. And nobody enjoys having to clamber over the stone wall again and again."

Snowball said nothing for a few minutes. He was thinking.

"When I run, why do you follow me if you don't wish to?" he inquired at last.

"I don't know," the old lady confessed. "Maybe I fell into the habit of following when I was young. Anyhow, I can't help myself now. I just have to go along with the others."

Poor lady!

XV

UNCLE JERRY OBJECTS

Snowball really *meant* to be kind to the elderly dame, Aunt Nancy, who had objected to being led on the wild goose chases in which he delighted.

"I mustn't start another game of Follow My Leader," he said to himself. "Aunt Nancy says she can't help following. And for a person of her years it must be hard work to run."

But Snowball soon learned that he had set himself a hard task. Soon afterward he found himself suddenly running. He hadn't *meant* to run. Yet there he was, bounding along towards the stone wall as

fast as he could jump! And the whole flock was following him, with Aunt Nancy puffing hard among the stragglers, doing her best to keep up.

Over the wall went Snowball. Over the wall went all the rest. Aunt Nancy was the last to leap down upon the ledge where Snowball had stopped. And he could see that she was upset. He edged away from her. But she shouldered her friends aside (she was a huge person!) and walked straight up to him.

"You're a spoiled child," she told Snowball. "Here you've gone and led us over this wall again! And I just told you I didn't want to run anywhere—over this wall least of all places!"

Snowball felt much ashamed.

"I—I didn't mean to do it," he faltered. "Something set my feet a-going. I *had* to go along with them!"

"Is that so?" she cried in dismay. "My goodness! You've been and gone and got the habit of being leader! And you can't stop! . . . I don't know what I'm going to do!" she wailed. "There'll

be nothing left of me if this keeps up. I'll be nothing but fleece and bones if I have to run so much."

Somehow her friends didn't seem alarmed. Aunt Nancy was very fat. In fact she was so very, very fat that nobody thought she *could* waste away. And everybody smiled a little.

But she didn't notice that. And then a squeaky voice piped up:

"Is there an earthquake?"

It was Uncle Jerry Chuck peeping out of his hole, with his teeth chattering so fast that it seemed as if they must all drop out of his mouth.

"There's no earthquake," Aunt Nancy told him. "We just jumped off the wall upon this ledge—that's all."

"I was sure there was an earthquake," he said. "And the last quake was the worst of all."

There were more smiles then, for Aunt Nancy herself had been the last of the flock to plump down off the wall.

"I wish—" said Uncle Jerry Chuck—"I wish, when you folks jump the wall, you'd pick out a different place. You disturb me a dozen times a day. I'm losing lots of sleep on your account. And if I continue to lose my rest I'll be nothing but fur and bones."

Well, Uncle Jerry was fat, too. He looked as if it would do him a world of good to be thinner. But Aunt Nancy felt sorry for him.

"Whoever leads the way over the wall must pick out another spot," she declared, looking straight at Snowball as she spoke. "It's a shame to annoy this gentleman."

Everybody agreed with her good-naturedly. And Snowball said meekly that if he found himself running towards the wall he would try to turn his steps in another direction.

No one said anything more about the matter. For somebody suddenly cried, "*Baa! baa!*" and scrambled over the wall.

Of course the whole flock followed instantly, leaving Uncle Jerry Chuck to creep out of his hole and watch the last tail of all bob out of sight.

It was Aunt Nancy's.

"They're a queer lot," Uncle Jerry said aloud. He gave a long whistle. "I'm glad I'm not one of 'em," he added.

XVI

AUNT NANCY'S PLAN

All was quiet once more, after the race from the ledge near Uncle Jerry Chuck's home. The flock was feeding again. And if you hadn't noticed how Aunt Nancy Ewe puffed from her fast running you wouldn't have supposed there had just been a wild scramble over the stone wall and back.

Aunt Nancy was still feeling sorry for Uncle Jerry Chuck, whose rest had been disturbed by the thud of hoofs above his head. "Remember!" she said to Snowball sternly. "Don't go near Uncle Jerry's home again!"

"I won't!" he promised. "That is," he added, "I won't if I can help it. If I find myself running that way I may not be able to stop myself."

Now, that sort of promise wasn't enough for Aunt Nancy.

"You must turn aside!" she told Snowball. "Just make believe that there's a bear beyond the stone wall, instead of Uncle Jerry Chuck! *Then*—" she said—"*then* you'll turn quickly enough!"

"That's a good idea!" cried Snowball. "If only I don't forget it!"

Aunt Nancy's words never left his mind all the rest of the morning. Just thinking about bears made Snowball frightfully uneasy. Whenever one of the flock happened to stray up behind him Snowball jumped, fearing for a moment that it was a bear.

If anybody said *baa* in his ear he leaped to one side, expecting the *baa* to turn into a *woof!*

He began to wish that Aunt Nancy hadn't told him of her idea.

And all at once, when somebody came up behind him and gave him a nudge, Snowball started to run.

"There's a bear behind me!" he thought.

Of course the rest of the flock thought he was only playing Follow My Leader. So they followed him, every one of them.

Snowball went bounding across the pasture towards the stone wall, headed straight for the spot where Uncle Jerry Chuck had his home. When he was only a few jumps away from the wall he glanced back. He saw then that there was no bear behind him. But he did notice Aunt Nancy Ewe, doing her best to keep up with the rest. And then Snowball remembered what she had said to him. If a bear—instead of Uncle Jerry Chuck—lived in the hole at the foot of the ledge!

Well, that thought was enough to make Snowball swerve sharply to his right. And a few moments later he bobbed over the wall a little further up the hillside.

Snowball Gave A Frantic Blat.

beyond the wall grew a tangle of berry bushes. And into the midst of them Snowball jumped. And out of the midst of them, right in front of him, there rose up on his hind legs—a bear!

Snowball gave a frightened, frantic blat. The next instant he was scrambling back over the wall.

The foremost of the oncoming flock of sheep saw him. They couldn't think what had happened. Anyhow, they couldn't stop. Close behind them pressed the flock, all bunched together and hurrying blindly on.

XVII

A TERRIBLE MIX-UP

There was a terrible mix-up. Some sheep were trying to cross the stone wall in one direction. Some were trying to cross it in the other. And in the midst of the fleecy tangle Snowball struggled in vain. He found himself face to face with Aunt Nancy Ewe, who was so huge that he couldn't budge her. He pushed and shoved until she cried out, "Where are your manners, young man?"

"I—I don't know," Snowball stammered. "Maybe I left them in the berry bushes, with the bear."

Well, the moment she heard the word

bear Aunt Nancy blatted at the top of her lungs. With a mighty heave she turned about on the top of the wall, sweeping Snowball off it as if he were nothing but a fly.

He fell backwards among the raspberry bushes, fully expecting to be eaten by the bear. He shut his eyes and held his breath, and lay with his feet in the air, waiting for the bear to seize him.

"Oh, dear!" he groaned. "I wonder if he'll begin with my head or my tail!"

Just then he felt a terrible nip at the end of his tail.

"He's begun! The bear has begun to eat me!" Snowball thought.

As for the bear, he didn't say a single word. And that seemed odd. Somehow Snowball didn't quite like it because the bear didn't exclaim how nice and tender he was. His tail was still held fast. And that was as much as Snowball knew.

At last he slowly opened his eyes. To his astonishment he saw no bear. In fact he saw

nobody at all. For the last of Farmer Green's flock of sheep had vanished. And Snowball noticed, resting on the tip of his tail, a stone. Though he did not know it, the last sheep to leave had kicked it down upon him purely by accident.

Snowball gave a *baa* of surprise and relief. With a little effort he managed to jerk his tail from under the stone. Then he sprang to his feet. And since there was no knowing where the bear was, Snowball made all haste to get on the other side of the stone wall and join the flock of sheep once more.

When Aunt Nancy saw him she did not act half as pleased as he had expected she would.

"You got us into a pickle, young man!" she greeted him.

"It seems to me," he replied, "that you are the one that made all the trouble. If you hadn't made me jump the wall——"

"If *I* hadn't made *you*——" Aunt Nancy interrupted. And turning to her companions she

cried, "Did you ever hear anything like that in all your days?"

And everybody said, "No!"

And then somebody asked, "Where's the bear?"

But nobody could answer that question.

The only one that could have answered it was Cuffy Bear himself. And he was way up under the mountain—and still running.

There wasn't a sheep in the flock that had been more frightened than he.

XVIII

THE SWING

As Snowball grew older he began to enjoy a fine, new sport. At least this sport was new to him. All the old rams had enjoyed it for years. But it was not until Snowball's horns began to grow that he became interested in having fun in this way.

The new sport was *butting*. Snowball was careful not to butt any sheep that were much bigger than he was. For instance, he never even threatened to butt the black lamb, who was some months the older of the two. And Snowball didn't butt Johnnie Green; for Snowball was fond of him.

Snowball didn't feel the same toward other boys. Other boys liked to tease him. A neighbor's boy called "Red" was the biggest tease of them all.

He never missed a chance to bother Snowball—unless Johnnie Green objected.

So it was only to be expected that Snowball should want to butt Red. More than once he had stolen up behind Red and butted him as hard as he could butt.

At first Red only laughed. But as Snowball grew bigger—and heavier—Red no longer found anything to laugh at in Snowball's favorite sport. Instead of laughing, Red was more likely to go to rubbing himself where Snowball had struck him.

"You'll have to get rid of this pet of yours!" Red said to Johnnie Green. "That is, you'll have to if you expect me to come to your place any longer."

"I won't get rid of Snowball," Johnnie Green declared. "It serves you right if he butts you. You've teased him too often. I don't blame Snowball at all."

"Send him away, now; or I'll go home," Red threatened.

At that Johnnie Green drove Snowball behind the barn. But he wouldn't stay there. He came trotting back to the farmyard in no time.

"Leave him alone! Don't pay any attention to him and he won't touch you!" Johnnie advised Red.

However, that young man was uneasy. But he said nothing more about the matter. And turning to the swing under the big old apple tree he cried, "Come on, Johnnie! I'll swing you."

Now, Johnnie Green had swung in that swing thousands of times. But it wasn't often anybody was willing to stand and

push him until he went up, up, up, high among the leafy branches.

"All right!" he said. "None of your tricks, now!"

Red only grinned. And he began pushing Johnnie. He pushed so hard that for once Johnnie

was satisfied. Once he thought the swing seat—with him on it—was going to turn completely over.

The whole thing was most strange. It was most unusual. Red was always ready to be swung. Never had he been willing, before, to swing anybody else. So Johnnie decided to enjoy the fun while he could. Back and forth he rode in long sweeps.

Meanwhile Snowball kept edging nearer. He was behind Red. And all the time Red kept a careful eye on him. But of this Johnnie Green saw nothing. For of course his back was turned to Red and to Snowball, too.

There was no doubt that Snowball wanted to take a hand in the sport—or perhaps it would be better to say *take a horn*. Anyhow he lowered his head now and then, and shook it. And at last he stamped upon the ground.

"Hang tight, Johnnie!" Red cried. "Here comes the biggest push of all!" And he gave Johnnie a mighty shove.

Then Red waved his tattered hat almost in Snowball's face.

That was a deadly insult. At least so Snowball thought. He gathered his legs beneath him. He shot forward.

Already Johnnie Green had begun his long backward swing.

For a moment you would have thought Red was going to get caught in a tight place. Johnnie Green was almost upon him. Snowball was almost upon him.

And then Red jumped.

XIX

THE WRONG TARGET

Give me another push like that one!" Johnnie Green shouted from the swing.

Little did he dream that Snowball was rushing towards him from behind, rushing with head lowered in his best butting style.

Of course when the boy Red slipped out of the way there was only one thing that could happen. A moment after Johnnie shouted, Snowball struck the swing seat.

Crash! Bang! Split! A terrible cry from Johnnie Green! And a second or two later a dull thud!

The crash, bang and split came when Snowball's head met the swing seat. The thud followed when Johnnie hit the ground.

Then all was quiet, except for a low moaning from the spot where Johnnie Green lay.

Red had climbed spryly into a wagon which stood near-by. But he soon saw that he needn't have gone to that trouble. For Snowball plainly had no more butts left in him for the time being. He stood still in a dazed fashion and stared dully about him. The heavy oaken swing seat had been no soft mark to hit, sailing swiftly through the air with eighty pounds of boy upon it.

Red had given one great shout. But now he too was very quiet. He jumped out of the wagon and ran to Johnnie Green, and lifted Johnnie's head.

"Are you hurt, Johnnie?" he asked.

But it was almost a minute before

Johnnie Green could speak. It was almost as long as that before he could even breathe. He lay there gasping, with his hands clutched across his stomach. His eyes rolled about in the queerest way. If Red hadn't been frightened he would have laughed in Johnnie's face.

At last Johnnie Green spoke.

"Wh-wh-what happened?" he asked in a halting whisper. "Did the ropes break?"

"No!" Red answered. "The ropes held—though it's a wonder."

"Can't you tell me what happened?" Johnnie begged him. "If it wasn't the ropes, what was it?"

"It was Snowball," said Red. "He butted you."

"I don't believe it," cried Johnnie. "He never butted me in his whole life."

Johnnie Green was sitting up now. And since he didn't seem to be much hurt the boy Red couldn't help grinning.

"Look at that swing seat!" he exclaimed, pointing to the splintered bit of oak board near Johnnie. "You don't think—do you?—that I split that thing with *my* head?"

And then Johnnie Green just had to believe him. And Johnnie began to get angry, too.

"You must have seen Snowball coming," he growled. "Why didn't you warn me?"

Red swallowed a few times as he tried to think of a good answer.

"Well," he replied finally, "I didn't *know* he was going to butt you, did I? Didn't you just say yourself that he never *had* butted you?"

To all this Johnnie Green made no answer.

"If you ask me," Red went on more easily, "I should say you were lucky. You were lucky to have that swing seat under you."

Johnnie Green rose slowly to his feet.

"There's something queer about this," he declared.

"That's so," Red agreed. "There is. You'd just asked for another hard push. . . . And you got one —a harder one than I could have given you. . . . So I don't see what you're complaining about."

And then he pretended that he didn't understand why Johnnie Green tried to hit him.

XX

THE SWIMMING HOLE

After the affair at the swing it was as much as a week before Johnnie Green saw anything of his neighbor Red.

It was almost a week before Snowball felt like butting anybody. Even when other sheep bullied him Snowball edged away from them; and once he would have run into them head first.

Somehow he couldn't forget that frightful jolt he had received when he knocked Johnnie Green out of the swing.

At last, however, he tried a gentle butt one day against the soft side of one of his mates. And finding only pleasure, and no pain, in the trick he became once more one of the most active butters in Farmer Green's whole flock.

Now, Johnnie Green had noticed that for a few days Snowball was unusually well behaved. And Snowball's gentleness did not please him. For Johnnie had hoped that sometime Snowball would butt the neighbor's boy Red.

So Johnnie Green began to whistle a merry tune a little later, when he chanced to see Snowball charging the hired man as he crossed the pasture.

Not long after that Johnnie Green went swimming. He found other boys at the swimming hole, which they had made by damming Broad Brook where it cut across the end of the meadow. Among the swimmers was the boy Red. It was the first time Johnnie had seen him since that day when Snowball butted Johnnie.

When Johnnie spied Red in the water he thought for a moment or two that he would find Red's clothes on the bank and tie knots in them. That was a favorite trick of Red's—tying hard knots in other boys' clothes. Sometimes he even wet the knots, to make them harder to untie.

But Johnnie Green decided that he wouldn't knot Red's clothes. Besides, Red seemed to be keeping a watchful eye on them.

Johnnie slipped out of his own clothes quickly and soon he had dived off a flat rock and joined the boys in the swimming hole.

Red had called "Hullo!" pleasantly enough. And then Johnnie was sure he said something in an undertone to the others. Anyhow they all grinned. And one boy cried, "I didn't expect to see you down here. I thought you'd be swinging.

Wouldn't you rather swing than swim?"

Johnnie Green gave a sickly smile.

"Why didn't you bring your lamb with you?" another inquired. "Doesn't he follow you any more?"

But Johnnie Green had ducked down where he couldn't hear and was swimming under water. When he came up everybody yelled at him. That is, everybody yelled except Red. *He* looked very innocent, as if he didn't know what the joke was.

Well, Johnnie Green had a good swim, anyhow. And the boys soon stopped teasing him. They had several swimming races, with a good deal of splashing mixed in. And there was so much fun that nobody noticed when Red crawled out upon the bank and slipped away behind the drooping willows that overhung the stream. The boys saw him plainly enough a little while afterward. Fully dressed he stood on the bank and jeered at them. And they knew what that meant. It meant that he had tied plenty of knots in everybody's clothes.

All the boys except Johnnie Green yelled at him.

"We'll fix you when we catch you!" they cried.

As for Johnnie, he said never a word. In fact he didn't even look angry. On the contrary, he smiled. For he saw something that his friends had overlooked.

Some distance behind Red Johnnie saw the willows part. And a white face peered out.

It was Snowball's.

XXI

A DUCKING

As he stood there on the great flat rock over the swimming hole Red never guessed that Snowball was behind him. But the swimmers soon noticed Snowball. And they all began to call to Red. They didn't care what they said, so long as they could keep Red so busy answering them that he wouldn't turn around and discover Snowball. They splashed about, and hooted, and on the whole made such an uproar that Red couldn't have heard the Muley Cow had she walked up behind him.

Now, there was nothing that Red enjoyed any more than a wordy battle.

Whenever a boy called him a name Red hurled a worse one back at him. It seemed as if he actually took pride in making blood curdling

retorts. Certainly he didn't mean to leave, so long as anybody gave him an excuse for a jibe.

Meanwhile Snowball had spied Red. And to Snowball he was a tempting sight. As Snowball drew nearer Red leaned forward with his hands upon his knees and taunted Johnnie Green: "You'd better keep that ole ram-lamb of yours out of my way! If he ever comes near me I'll——"

Nobody ever found out what it was that Red meant to do. His threat stuck fast in his throat. For before he could utter it Snowball lowered his head and dashed at him. He gave Red a butt that lifted him off the rock and sent him sailing through the air with arms and legs waving wildly, to fall with a great splash into the swimming hole, where the water was deepest.

There was a howl of delight. But it did not come from Red. He was somewhere between the surface of the water and the mucky bottom.

Presently he appeared, spluttering and blowing and gasping. For once in his life Red had nothing to say in answer to the jibes and jeers of his mates.

His hat was floating near him. Johnnie Green snatched it up, scooped it full of water and clapped it upon Red's head.

Even then Red didn't say a word.

But when Snowball looked blandly down at the boys from the great flat rock and said, "*Baa-a-a!*"—then Red spoke.

He spoke his mind very freely and at some length. And he dared Johnnie to come out upon the bank with him.

Johnnie Green promptly swam towards the bank where Snowball stood.

"Not that side!" cried Red. "The other one!"

But Johnnie remarked mildly that he supposed of course Red meant the side towards home. "You've got all your clothes on," said Johnnie. "You wouldn't want to have to cross the brook, later, and get them wet."

Now, since Red's clothes were as wet as clothes could be, that seemed a very stupid remark. And

Red told Johnnie Green—well, he told him a number of things. And then Red scrambled up the opposite bank from the one where Snowball stood, and started off, leaving a trail of water behind him.

Johnnie Green and his friends forsook the swimming hole and took their clothes out upon the flat rock, which was warm in the sunshine. And there they spent a pleasant time untying the knots that Red had made in them. But first the boys made Johnnie Green drive Snowball away.

"Red will catch it when he gets home," said one of them. "His father told him not to go swimming to-day."

And not one of them said he was sorry.

XXII

A GREAT JOKE

Farmer Green played a great joke on his flock of sheep. At least that was what Snowball thought. Since he was not really one of Farmer Green's flock, but belonged to Johnnie Green, he escaped this joke himself. And that was the reason why he was able to laugh so heartily at all his companions.

The joke was this: Farmer Green and the hired man sheared the sheep. Close clipped as they were, the flock looked very odd. When Snowball caught his first glimpse of the young black ram, after Farmer Green had sheared him and turned him back into the pasture, minus his fleece, Snowball did not know him. Just for a moment Snowball thought the young black ram was a new kind of dog.

"Old dog Spot won't care for this stranger," Snowball thought. He was about to warn the stranger to leave the farm at once, when he saw that he wasn't a dog after all. For Snowball noticed that he ate grass.

"He's a queer creature. And whatever he may be, Spot's sure to dislike him. So I'll advise him to run along, anyhow," Snowball decided.

So Snowball called out, "There's an old dog on this farm that will chase you if he catches you here. You'd better go away before he finds you."

To Snowball's amazement the stranger looked at him boldly and said, "*Baa-a-a!*" Then, in a flash, Snowball knew that it was the voice of the young black ram, and no other.

"What's happened to you?" Snowball cried, as soon as he could speak.

"Haven't you heard the news?" the black ram asked him. "Didn't you know that Farmer Green and the hired man had begun to shear us?"

"No!" Snowball exclaimed.

Snowball and the Black Ram Met Head to Head.

"Well, they have," said the black ram. "And Farmer Green paid me the honor of shearing me himself, the first of all."

"The honor!" Snowball repeated. "I don't see why you think it's an *honor*. Why, you're the queerest looking animal on the farm." And he began to laugh at the black ram, and blat at him.

Now, the black ram was a peppery chap. He promptly lost his temper and stamped his feet and shook his head at Snowball.

"I'll butt you for that!" he bawled.

Once Snowball would have retreated. The black ram had always been both older and bigger than he. But now, though the black ram was still older, he looked smaller. That, of course, was because he had lost his thick fleece. He looked so much smaller that Snowball was no longer afraid of him.

For the first time since he had come to the farm to live Snowball lowered his head at the black ram. And he didn't even wait for the black ram to make the first move. Instead, Snowball charged him.

A moment later they met, head to head, with a shock that knocked Snowball off his feet.

"My goodness!" Snowball exclaimed as he picked himself up. "You're bigger than you look."

"Do you want any more?" the black ram demanded fiercely. "I've done you

the honor to knock you down. Is once enough?"

Snowball thought once was even too much. He left the black ram hurriedly and ran down toward the bars.

Some very odd looking creatures were entering the pasture.

XXIII

A MYSTERY

As Snowball drew near the pasture bars he forgot about the blow on the head that the black ram had given him. The strange sights that greeted his eyes drove all unpleasant things out of his mind.

Snowball knew that the sheep he saw before him must be his old companions. But they were so changed, by shearing, that he couldn't tell who was who.

He stood still and stared at them and grinned.

"What amuses you, young man?" one of them asked him in a tart voice. The speaker was a big old dame. Even with her fleece closely cropped she looked undeniably fat. Yet she was wrinkled, too. And her neck had a scrawny look.

Not until she spoke did Snowball guess that this person was Aunt Nancy Ewe. The moment he heard her voice he knew her. And he couldn't help laughing right in her face.

"Don't be rude, young man!" Aunt Nancy scolded. "Anybody would think you had never seen a sheared flock before."

"I haven't," Snowball answered. "You're all so funny that I can't keep my face straight."

"Well," she said, "you'll have a chance to laugh at yourself a little later. For you'll certainly be sheared too."

Snowball turned sober instantly.

"Oh! Do you think so?" he cried.

"They'll never let you keep that fleece on all summer," Aunt Nancy declared.

She had scarcely finished speaking when Farmer Green came into the pasture. And Snowball was sure that Farmer Green looked directly at him. But before Snowball could make up his mind to

run, Johnnie Green came hurrying after his father, and shouting.

"Don't touch Snowball!" he called. "Don't you shear him!"

"Why not?" his father asked him.

"Because," said Johnnie, "I want to shear him myself. He belongs to me."

"Very well!" his father replied. "Now we're here we may as well catch him. And you can begin shearing him. It will probably take you all day, because you've never sheared a sheep before."

"I don't want to shear him now," said Johnnie. "I'm going fishing to-day. I'll do it to-morrow."

Then Farmer Green and Johnnie went away. And they hadn't passed the bars when a great uproar broke out. The whole flock crowded around Snowball. And everybody except him said, "*Baa!*"

"He laughs best who laughs last," Aunt Nancy remarked to him. "To-morrow we'll laugh best—at you!"

But Snowball stood his ground and shook his head.

"I'm not going to be sheared," he declared. "I guess you don't know what Johnnie Green's 'tomorrow' means. . . . It means 'never!'"

Snowball really thought he was right about that.

The next morning he found that he had been mistaken. For Johnnie Green came and cornered—and caught—him. And amid a chorus of *baas* Johnnie led Snowball to the barn.

"Let's wait at the bars until Johnnie brings Snowball back!" cried the young black ram, who bad knocked Snowball down the day before. "We want to give him a good welcome when he comes back without his fleece."

"It's useless to wait," said Aunt Nancy. "You know Farmer Green said it would take Johnnie all day to shear him."

Along toward noon the black ram came hurrying to the upper end of the pasture, where most of the sheep were feeding.

"Snowball's here!" he blatted. "And he's sheared, too!"

And just then Aunt Nancy Ewe came puffing and panting to join the others.

"Snowball's back in the pasture!" she gasped. "And he isn't sheared at all!"

Well, nobody knew what to think of that.

XXIV

HALF AND HALF

All the sheep in the pasture hurried down the hillside toward the bars to look at Snowball. And soon dozens of disputes might have been heard: "He is!" "He isn't!" "He's sheared!" "He's not!" About half the flock were sure Johnnie Green had sheared Snowball; while the other half were just as sure that Snowball still wore his fleece.

At last Aunt Nancy Ewe went close to Snowball and walked all the way around him. And when she joined her friends she announced that she had solved the mystery.

"Snowball is sheared on one side only!" she exclaimed.

It was true. And the moment the flock learned what had happened they set up a deafening *baaing*. "*Baa-ha-ha-ha-ha!*" they laughed. "Now who's a sight?" they asked Snowball. "Now who looks funny?"

Poor Snowball couldn't say a word. He hung his head. For he was terribly ashamed of his appearance.

"It's not my fault," he wailed at last. "When Johnnie Green had me half sheared that horrid boy Red came along and asked Johnnie to go fishing. And you know Johnnie Green! He can't miss a fishing trip. . . . He said he'd finish shearing me to-morrow."

"Ha!" cried Aunt Nancy Ewe. And she flung at Snowball the very words he had used the day before. "Johnnie

Green's 'to-morrow' means 'never!'"

"Oh! I hope not!" cried Snowball. "That would be awful!"

Somehow Snowball managed to get through that first dreadful day. But the following day he gave up all hope; for Johnnie Green never came near him. Nor did he come the next day, nor the next, nor the next.

Little by little the sheep stopped teasing Snowball. Little by little he became used to having one side of him sheared and the other side thick with fleece.

For some time he tried to keep as much out of sight as possible, grazing along the stone wall where he could bury himself in the bushes whenever one of the flock strayed near him. Or if he couldn't hide, he took pains to stand so that only one side of him should show.

It was a long while before his neighbors stopped smiling when they saw him. But finally there were only two in the flock that couldn't seem to forget how ridiculous Snowball looked. These were the young black ram and old Aunt Nancy Ewe. And perhaps they can't be blamed, because Snowball had once openly made fun of them. When they were near him Snowball was very

uncomfortable. But with the rest of the flock he felt more at his ease. And sometimes he even went so far as to say that he *enjoyed* being half sheared.

"On a cool day I find it pleasant to turn my clipped side toward the sun," he would remark. "And if there's a chilly wind I don't have to shiver. I let it blow against my fleecy side; and I never feel it."

In two weeks Snowball was claiming that he *preferred* to be only half sheared.

Maybe that was true. Maybe he was

only trying to make himself think it was. Anyhow, when Johnnie Green came into the pasture one day and called to him Snowball bounded down the grassy slope toward the bars.

And when he came back to the pasture, some time later, he didn't look very different from his companions. One side of him, however, showed a pinkish tinge, because Johnnie Green had just sheared that side very close. And the fleece on his other side had already begun to grow out a bit.

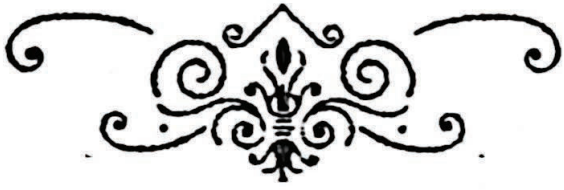
But Snowball didn't mind that. He had a pink nose, always. And he said that pink was his favorite color.

And never again did he laugh at anybody, no matter how queer a person might look.

THE END

GUNSTON CLASSICS

SLUMBER-TOWN TALES

- *The Tale of Miss Kitty Cat* (c. 1921)
- *The Tale of Old Dog Spot* (c. 1921)
- *The Tale of Henrietta Hen* (c. 1921)
- *The Tale of Pony Twinkleheels* (c. 1921)
- *The Tale of Grunty Pig* (c. 1921)
- *The Tale of Muley Cow* (c. 1921)
- *The Tale of Turkey Proudfoot* (c. 1921)
- *The Tale of Snowball Lamb* (c. 1922)
- *The Tale of Mistah Mule* (c. 1923)

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